![NCADD Maryland logo]

House Judiciary Committee
April 1, 2024

Senate Bill 134 – Office of the Correctional Ombudsman - Establishment and Funding Support

NCADD-Maryland supports Senate Bill 134. The bill will allow an ombudsperson to receive and investigate complaints related to health care and other services that are provided to people who are incarcerated in state facilities. We are grateful to the sponsor for explicitly including that issues related to services for substance use disorders can be evaluated and investigated.

People in prisons and jails are disproportionately likely to have a range of chronic health problems, from diabetes, high blood pressure, HIV, and Hepatitis C, to substance use and mental health disorders. At the same time, correctional health care is inconsistent, difficult to access, and of low quality. The publication *Governing* stated this in 2019 (pre-COVID):

> *The nation's incarcerated population is aging rapidly, with nearly four times as many inmates 55 or over as there were at the start of this century. That's led to increased rates of diabetes and heart disease, among many other problems. Younger offenders are hardly the picture of health, given their high rates of addiction. Altogether, prisoners make up 1 percent of the population, yet they account for 35 percent of the nation's total cases of hepatitis C.*[1]

Experts acknowledge that conditions for people who are incarcerated improve when systems are in place to monitor quality.[2]

We ask for technical amendments to use updated language, changing "SUBSTANCE ABUSE" to "SUBSTANCE *USE DISORDER* ~~ABUSE~~." in the following places:

- o On page 7, in line 8
- o On page 11, in line 21
- o On page 17, in line 6

With these amendments, we urge a favorable report on SB 134.

---

[1] https://www.governing.com/archive/gov-prison-health-care.html
[2] https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/articles/2018/05/18/prison-health-care-quality-monitoring-systems-vary-by-state